Montana governor and first lady visit, praise INL

Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer, his wife, Nancy, and four of the governor's staff visited the Idaho National Laboratory on the morning of Jan. 9 to learn about the research, development and demonstration capabilities and programs here.

In a meeting with media, Gov. Schweitzer declared, "If INL was closer to Washington, DC, we would be closer to solving our energy problems." He also related a conversation with an INL scientist where he queried whether INL could "invent a membrane to separate Montana methane from Montana water."

Saying "This is a wonderful facility," Schweitzer went on to say, "The research conducted here at INL is applicable for the entire world, the technology developed here today will be applied all over the world in the next ten years; there's nothing more important in this country than clean and green energy that's domestically produced."

INL Director John Grossenbacher, DOE Idaho Operations Office Manager Beth Sellers and other senior INL and Department of Energy staff welcomed Gov. Schweitzer. Grossenbacher said, "Thank you for coming to INL. We are glad for this visit because Montana is one of the most important energy states in America." Noting that $77 billion is spent on federal research efforts in the U.S., Sellers said, "Montana and INL should have greater ties, especially with Montana universities."

J.W. "Bill" Rogers, Jr., associate laboratory director for Energy and Environment, provided an overview of INL energy research and programs. He said, "We are an energy systems laboratory with strong motivation to reduce dependence on foreign oil imports." He outlined programs on basic science and technology development at INL, which are directed at national and regional application for "getting the right energy to the right place at the right time."

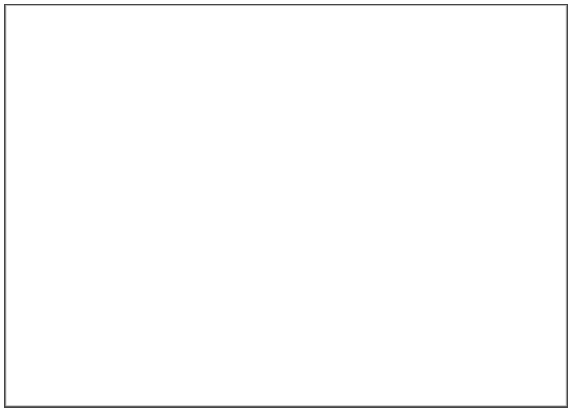
Then, Gov. Schweitzer toured the newly dedicated $10 million High-Performance Computing Center at INL and learned about the connectivity planned to boost computing capacities for scientific research. He also received an overview of INL's feedstock research and systems designs that support key biofuels applications.

At the INL Research Center campus, Gov. Schweitzer visited the Advanced Energy Storage Facility where he learned about two key INL programs, the Advanced Vehicle Testing Activity and the Vehicle Technologies and Energy Storage Program. These programs work with the auto and power industries to advance efforts like plug-in electric vehicle research.

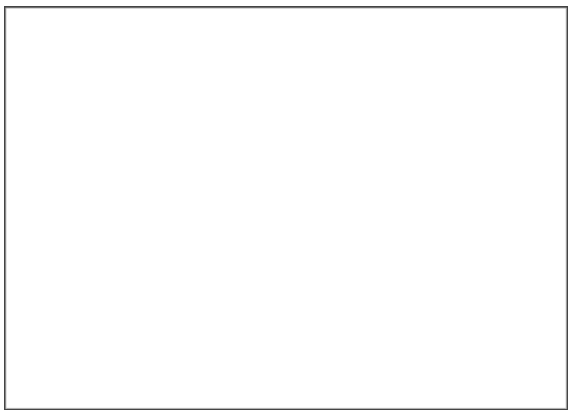
On his way to the IRC laboratories, Gov. Schweitzer got a quick overview and hands-on look at the biomass agriculture research program with a huge sensor-laden farming combine on the plaza. He learned about some of the simulations and visualization tools used to design farm equipment in the field to assist in reducing costs of harvesting for biomass.

Inside the IRC, he and his staff toured laboratories dealing with interfacial chemistry, catalysis, biological systems and membrane separations. He learned about coal-to-liquids for transportation energies, brucellosis detection for bison populations, extremophile research from Yellowstone National Park hot pools and several other research areas.

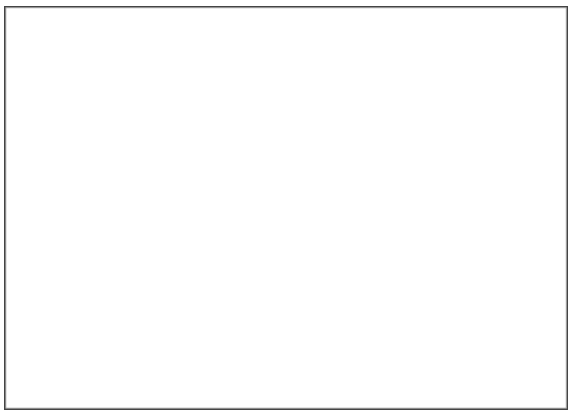
Joining the governor for this tour were staff members Jan Lombardi, Tom Kaiserski, Eric Stern and Kevin Furey. Kaiserski and Furey continued to tour INL, including the Materials and Fuels Complex, the Space and Security Power Systems Facility, the Hot Fuel Examination Facility and the Fuel Conditioning Facility. They also received briefs on liquefied natural gas technologies, renewable energy and biofuels, geosciences, high-temperature electrolysis and innovative fossil energy recovery systems.



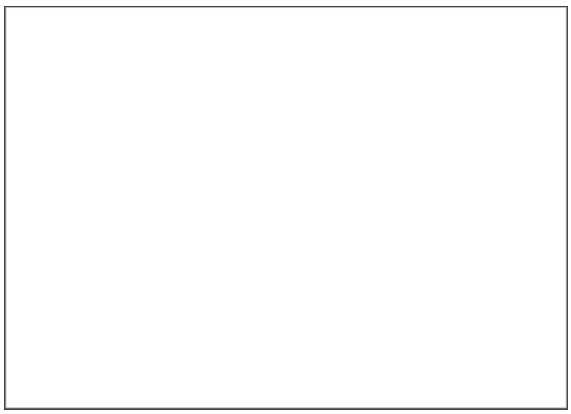
Researcher Richard Hess explains INL's biofuels research program that includes feedstock harvesting, pre-treatment preparations for biomass processing and farm equipment designs.



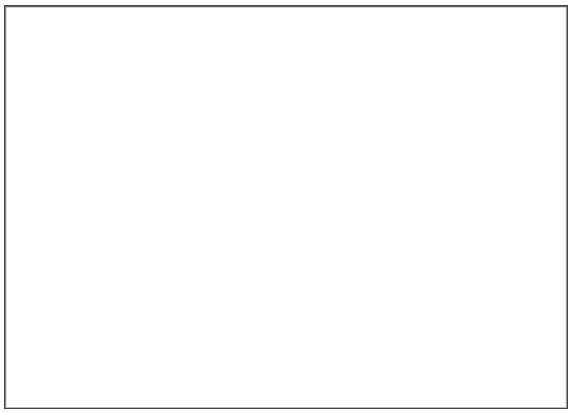
John Smart provides an overview to Gov. Schweitzer of the Advanced Vehicle Testing Activity that INL manages for the Department of Energy in support of advancing hybrid and plug-in electric car research for industry.



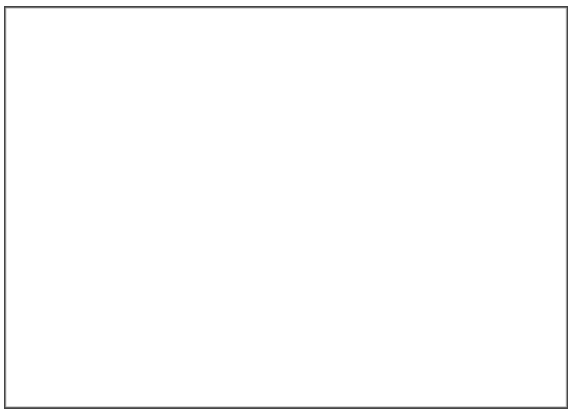
INL researcher Jon Christophersen shows to Gov. Schweitzer a Toyota Prius car battery array and details the testing and data validation on the system.



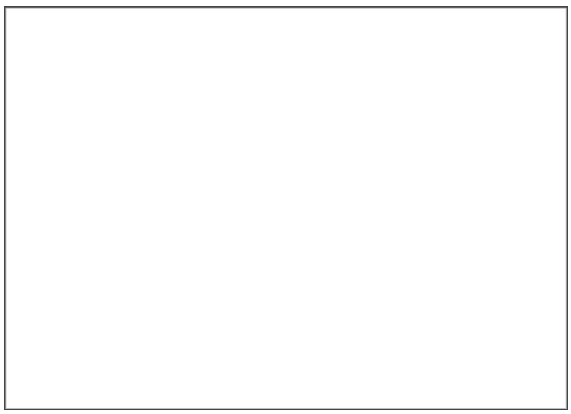
INL researcher Jon Christophersen explains to Gov. Schweitzer the key elements of the Vehicle Technologies and Energy Storage Program at INL, which supports car battery testing and other facets of research.



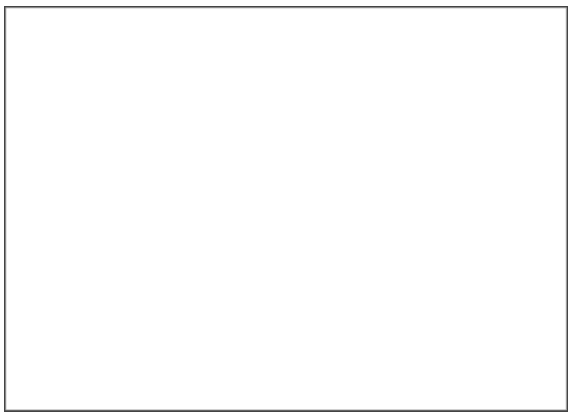
INL researcher Chris Wright relates to Gov. Schweitzer the specific sensor systems installed on INL's test farm combine that aided in revising harvesting techniques to collect biomass for processing into ethanol.



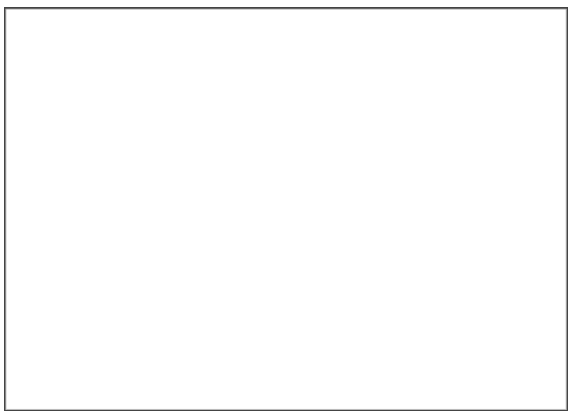
Gov. Schweitzer received a briefing from INL researcher Lucia Petkovic on catalysis, a process that accelerates chemical changes and is used in many different technological applications.



Gov. Schweitzer visited INL's Membrane Separations Laboratory and received a briefing from INL researcher Fred Stewart on membrane functions, the challenges of creating various membranes and the separation processes that have been devised at INL.



Gov. Schweitzer dons eye protection prior to entering INL laboratories for briefings on Jan. 9.



Gov. Schweitzer met with Southeastern Idaho media at the end of his tours and briefings. He said, "The research conducted here at INL is applicable for the entire world, the technology developed here today will be applied all over the world in the next ten years; there′s nothing more important in this country than clean and green energy that′s domestically produced."

General Contact:
Keith Arterburn, (208) 526-4845

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